

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 SSC-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 EB-07 COME-00

DHA-02 DIWY-01 HEW-04 /085 W
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P 011716Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4530

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 25429

DEPT PASS LABOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, FR

SUBJECT: NEWLY APPOINTED MINISTER OF LABOR CHRISTIAN
BEULLAC

REF: PARIS 25052

1. ONE OF THE MORE SURPRISING APPOINTMENTS TO THE
NEW CABINET FROM A TECHNICAL POINT OF VIEW WAS THAT
OF THE LABOR MINISTER CHRISTIAN BEULLAC. HE WAS
DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE NATIONALIZED AUTOMOBILE
COMPANY RENAULT AND HAD NEVER SHOWN ANY INTEREST IN
POLITICS.

2. BORN 29 NOVEMBER 1923 IN MARSEILLAN IN THE SOUTH
OF FRANCE, BEULLAC, SON OF AN INDUSTRIALIST, GRADUATED
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FROM THE WELL KNOWN POLYTECHNIQUE SCHOOL AS ENGINEER

OF ROADS AND BRIDGES AND FROM THE HIGHER COLLEGE OF ELECTRICITY. HE HOLDS ALSO A DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCES.

3. IN 1949 HE WAS APPOINTED DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF ELECTRICITY IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND FROM 1952-54 HE WAS RAPPORTEUR OF THE ENERGY COMMISSION IN THE PLAN. FOLLOWING A BRIEF APPOINTMENT AS MEMBER OF THE STAFF OF THE INDUSTRY MINISTER DEALING WITH ENERGY QUESTIONS, HE QUIT GOVERNMENT SERVICE IN 1955 TO TAKE A POSITION WITH RENAULT. HE ROSE RAPIDLY IN THE RENAULT HIERARCHY BY BECOMING SUCCESSIVELY FIRST DIRECTOR GENERAL OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION AND THEN IN 1971 DEPUTY TO RENAULT PRESIDENT PIERRE DREYFUS. HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH HE HAD BEEN THOUGHT AS THE MOST LIKELY SUCCESSOR TO DREYFUS WHEN THE LATTER RETIRED LATE IN 1975, THE NUMBER THREE MAN IN RENAULT WAS APPOINTED IN DREYFUS' PLACE WITH BEULLAC RETAINING HIS NUMBER TWO POSITION. IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT BEULLAC WAS BYPASSED BECAUSE OF HIS LIMITED EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH ORGANIZED LABOR WHICH, IN A HIGHLY ORGANIZED PLANT SUCH AS RENAULT, IS AN IMPORTANT QUALIFICATION FOR THE TOP JOB.

4. BEULLAC'S NAME IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH RENAULT'S SUCCESSFUL DRIVE OF THE LAST FEW YEARS TO DIVERSIFY ITS PRODUCTION LINES SO AS TO REDUCE ITS DEPENDENCE ON THE AUTOMOBILE MARKET. IT IS REPORTED THAT BEULLAC'S MOTIVATION BEHIND THIS DRIVE WAS AS MUCH INSPIRED BY INTEREST TO PROTECT IF NOT EXPAND RENAULT'S EMPLOYMENT AS BY PURELY ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THE COMPANY.

5. BEULLAC ENJOYS A SOLID REPUTATION FOR HIS INTELLIGENCE, ABILITY TO LISTEN BUT ALSO TO

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INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 25429

ARGUE BACK EFFECTIVELY, HIS COURTESY IN HIS RELATIONS WITH PEOPLE AND, ABOVE ALL, FOR HIS EVEN TEMPER AND METHODICAL STYLE OF WORK. AMONG HIS COLLEAGUES IN RENAULT HE IS KNOWN FOR HIS THOROUGH HOMEWORK IN ADVANCE OF STAFF MEETINGS AND SUCH.

6. HE IS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF CHRISTIAN EMPLOYERS WHICH GROUPS BUSINESSMEN WHO SHARE SOME OF THE MORE REASONABLY PROGRESSIVE IDEAS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. IT IS ALLEGED AS A RESULT THAT BEULLAC IS FAVORABLY VIEWED BY THE MILITANT SOCIALIST CFDT.

7. COMMENT: IT HAS BEEN RUMORED THAT DREYFUS HIMSELF WAS FIRST SOLICITED FOR THE LABOR MINISTER JOB BUT REFUSED AND RECOMMENDED INSTEAD BEULLAC. IN ADDITION
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IT IS KNOWN THAT PRIME MINISTER BARRE HAS KNOWN BEULLAC FOR SOME TIME, THEREFORE DREYFUS' RECOMMENDATION FELL ON RECEPTIVE EARS. REACTION IN TRADE UNION CIRCLES TO BEULLAC'S APPOINTMENT WAS MORE OF A BENEVOLENT SURPRISE THAN ANYTHING ELSE. CONSEQUENTLY ONE WOULD BE JUSTIFIED IN SAYING THAT BEULLAC STARTS OUT WITH A NEUTRAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS HIM ON THE PART OF THE LABOR LEADERS. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT INTELLECTUALLY HE WILL MORE THAN MEASURE UP TO THE JOB AS FAR AS TECHNICAL MANPOWER AND LABOR LEGISLATION PROBLEMS ARE CONCERNED. WHETHER THIS WOULD BE ENOUGH

TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY ON BROAD SOCIAL ISSUES WITH THE
LABOR LEADERS REMAINS A QUESTION WHICH HAS ALREADY
BEEN ARTICULATED BY SEVERAL OBSERVERS.
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